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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1995, a national search for exemplary career guidance and counseling programs was conducted. Programs were compared from the standpoint of the following elements: career guidance and counseling program plan; collaboration, articulation, and communication; and institutional support, leadership, and program evaluation. The nine programs selected were found to include intensive career exploration and planning activities, serve all students, and maintain a strong program support system. In the areas of collaboration, articulation, and communication, all nine programs were found to have forged strong partnerships with parents, business, community organizations, teachers, and other personnel. Administrative support and leadership were demonstrated in each of the programs in a variety of ways, including the following: institutional commitment/support, wide range of resources/facilities available to counselors, adequate financial support, qualified/credentialed guidance personnel, planned professional development activities, regularly scheduled program evaluation, and follow-up of program completers and noncompleters. (This document includes lists of best practices and contacts and profiles of all nine exemplary programs.) (MN)

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NCRVE
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University of California, Berkeley

Office of Student Services
BRIEF

Volume 7, Number 3

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EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAMS: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

by Esmeralda S. Cunanan and Carolyn Maddy-Bernstein

"If there is a key to forging the connection between school and work, it lies in providing career counseling throughout the school years."
—U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1992—

The role of school counselors in the transition of students from school to work and lifelong learning cannot be overlooked. They may serve as the crucial link between students and their chances for rewarding careers. This BRIEF describes nationally recognized career guidance programs that are very successful in assisting students in their career development. A synthesis of the programs' components, background of the search process, and a list of the identified programs with a brief description are provided.

Background

In the fall of 1995, the National Center for Research in Vocational Education's (NCRVE) Office of Student Services' (OSS) national search for exemplary career guidance and counseling programs culminated with the announcement that nine programs were selected for recognition. These programs exemplify school efforts in implementing well-integrated, comprehensive career guidance programs designed to assist all students in transitioning from school to work, and/or further education. The identified programs should serve as models for others working to develop or enhance their career guidance programs.

All applications for the 1995 search were reviewed by a panel of recognized professionals in the field using strict research-based criteria that focused on three clusters of components: (a) career guidance and counseling program plan; (b) collaboration, articulation, and communication efforts; and (c) institutional support, leadership, and program evaluation. Reviewers recommended nine programs for site visits. All nine programs were determined to possess a majority of the attributes of exemplary career guidance and counseling programs.

Program Components

The various elements of the nine programs were compared to the three clusters of components described in the framework for identifying exemplary career guidance and counseling programs developed by Maddy-Bernstein in 1994 (see *Career Guidance Programs: What Should They Look Like?* for a complete description). Each program demonstrates strengths in many of the components research shows successful programs possess. Below is a summary of program highlights under each major component cluster.

A. *Career Guidance and Counseling Program Plan*

At the heart of all nine programs is the goal of helping students make informed educational and career choices and carry out plans by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. While these career guidance programs have been very effective in meeting the career developmental needs of students, they continue to stress the importance of continually improving their programs. Each program also addresses the three broad competency areas involved in the career development process that include: (a) self-knowledge and self-awareness, (b) educational and occupational exploration, and (c) decision-making and career planning. The following are some of the best practices found in the recognized programs.

1. **Students undergo intensive career exploration and planning.**

   - Use a career advisement system with every faculty and staff member advising a group of students during all of their secondary program. Conducting ongoing staff development activities on career advisement is crucial to its successful implementation.
   - Set up a career development center that consists of the state career information delivery system and other resources that counselors can use in serving a diverse group of students.
   - Use a wide range of career materials and assessment instruments.

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- Offer organized guidance curriculum and specialized programs in the secondary and postsecondary levels.

- Adapt the National Career Development Guidelines in designing and implementing a guidance curriculum.

- Conduct individual and group counseling.

- Guide students in developing their individualized career plans and career planning portfolios.

- Conduct workshops for students on self-awareness, assertiveness, problem solving, conflict resolution, communication skills, careers, parenting, and managing relationships. Collaborate with other school personnel in planning other in-service activities.

- Hold highly organized job fairs and career nights.

- Invite graduates to be ambassadors, mentors, nontraditional role models, members of advisory committees, or resource persons for the program.

2. **Serve all students.**

- Guidance and counseling program is available to diverse groups of students.
  - Members of special populations;
  - Students from different racial/ethnic, religious, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds;
  - Students enrolled in vocational-technical programs as well as students in all other programs; and
  - Those at-risk of failing or dropping out of school.

- Implement programs that address the needs of **all** students.
  - English as a Second Language (ESL) program(s),
  - Nontraditional program(s),
  - Summer vocational program(s) for youth,
  - Program(s) for displaced homemakers/single parents/single pregnant teens,
  - Computer literacy program(s), and
  - Workplace readiness skills program(s).

3. **Maintain strong program support system.**

- Human Resources — Mentors, advisors, tutors, volunteers, translators, interpreters, aides, and peer mediators.

- Programs and Services — Parent-Teacher Association groups, summer programs, JTPA, alumni associations, day care services, and business education partners.

- Instructional, career, and educational resources — Computer-related resources, audio-visual equipment (e.g., television, VCR, overhead projector, videos, slides), media centers, libraries, and interview clothes.

Career assessment instruments used include:

- ACT's Career Planning Program - provides students with accurate comprehensive information about their abilities and interests and helps them explore and identify career paths.
- DISCOVER by ACT - is a computer-assisted career assessment.
- COPSystem - incorporates three assessments which provide a coordinated system for career exploration and decision making. The COPS assessment measures interests, the CAPS assessment measures abilities, and the COPES assessment measures values.
- Career Assessment Inventory - measures vocational interests.
- Strong Interest Inventory - highly used career interest inventory that utilizes John Holland's theory.
- Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator - allows students to explore who they are and the importance this plays in making a good decision.
- System for Assessment and Group Evaluation (SAGE) - measures interests, aptitudes, and abilities, as well as learning styles and worker traits.
- Strong Interest Inventory - provides students the opportunity to explore occupations for which they have given little or no thought to before, simply because they have not been exposed to them.
- True Colors - a personality assessment that helps students to develop awareness of their own personality, that of others, and how to successfully interact with different personality types.
- SIGI Plus - includes a self-assessment section which allows students to choose the main interest fields they want to use at work.
- Career Values Card Sort - an exercise in clarifying values.
- Occupational Interests Card Sort - an exercise in rating career likes and dislikes.

B. Collaboration, Articulation, and Communication

These exemplary career guidance programs have forged strong partnerships with parents, businesses, community organizations, teachers, and other school personnel. Teamwork is key to the effective implementation of an integrated, comprehensive career guidance program. Everyone involved in the program is committed to helping every student succeed in school and, ultimately, in life.

1. **Family/Parental Involvement and Support**

- Strong school and family partnership is key to program success in secondary schools.

- Parents are involved in various facets of the student's life.

Activities that parents can participate in are:
- ➤ students' career planning,
- ➤ students' educational planning,
- ➤ advisory committees,
- ➤ individualized education program (IEP) meetings,
- ➤ financial aid workshops,
- ➤ parent-teacher conferences, and
- ➤ guidance and counseling sessions.

2. **Faculty/Staff Involvement**

- Faculty are partners in the career development program, including career information in the curriculum and conducting career development activities. Some schools have teachers serving as career advisors to a group of students.

- Faculty and guidance and counseling staff participate in in-service activities that focus on improving students' careers and education.

- During IEP meetings, teachers collaborate with career counselors and parents to fully meet the special needs of students.

- Academic and vocational teachers work together with counselors during student orientation, career advisory meetings, curriculum development, career assessment, information exchange meetings, and other counseling activities.

- Faculty refer students to counseling staff for individual counseling.

- Faculty and counselors collaborate to provide job placement assistance.

3. **Intra- and Interagency Collaboration**

- Career guidance and counseling programs maintain several collaborative campus efforts with other units and programs (e.g., Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Curriculum, Schools Improvement, Bilingual, Special Education).
  - Assessment of students' abilities, aptitudes, needs, and interests;
  - Development of an integrated curriculum;
  - Appropriate scheduling/placement of students;
  - Promotion of career guidance counseling program areas and courses; and
  - Program assessment.

- Career guidance and counseling staff work with external agencies in preparing students from school to work and/ postsecondary education.

4. **Collaboration with Business**

- Counselors conduct on-site visits of business and industry to keep abreast of the changes in the workplace and needs for personnel.

- Career guidance and counseling personnel establish cooperative agreements with businesses (e.g., electric companies, hospitals, banks, construction companies) to enable students to become familiar with the work environment.

Programs collaborate with the following agencies and organizations:
- ➤ Vocational rehabilitation centers;
- ➤ JTPA offices;
- ➤ YMCA, YWCA;
- ➤ State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee;
- ➤ Educational Service Centers;
- ➤ Tech Prep programs;
- ➤ Higher educational institutions;
- ➤ Chambers of Commerce; and
- ➤ Other civic organizations.

C. Institutional Support, Leadership, and Program Evaluation

The third group of components is typical of any good program. The success of the identified exemplary programs in meeting the career developmental needs of their students can be attributed to strong administrative leadership and support, financial backing, ongoing program evaluation, qualified personnel, organized professional development activities, and follow-up of program graduates and non-completers. There is a total commitment to assisting students in their transition from school to work and/or further education.

1. **Institutional Support** — Administrative support and leadership for each of the programs is demonstrated in several ways and different areas. For one, counselors have administrators who listen and are receptive to ideas for growth and improvement. Administrators are committed to responding to the needs of counseling staff by hiring needed and qualified personnel, providing space and facilities for counselors and students, conducting ongoing staff development programs, and providing financial support.

2. **Facilities** — A wide range of resources are available to counselors and students, including career resource centers, libraries, private counselors' offices, computers, audio-visual equipment, and assessment and career-related materials. Students, teachers, counselors, and parents are encouraged to take advantage of these resources.

3. **Financial Support** — Adequate funding is available for instructional materials, equipment, travel, and continuing education of counseling personnel. Funding sources include Carl Perkins, Department of Human Services, local school districts, private agencies, and other grants.

4. **Guidance Personnel Qualifications** — The professionals that make these career guidance programs work are qualified and credentialed individuals. Most of them have graduate degrees. In some situations, related background and work experience, as well as educational qualifications are taken into consideration when staffing.

5. **Professional Development** — To strengthen the various components of the exemplary career guidance and counseling programs, staff development activities are planned. The counseling staff attend workshops and seminars to improve their skills on career counseling, group and individual counseling, curriculum development, and assessment. The counselors also conduct in-service activities for other school personnel on topics such as sexual harassment, personality assessment, leadership styles, gender equity, and other career-related issues that are all aimed on how to better serve students.

6. **Program Evaluation** — Counseling staff consider program evaluation as a crucial component in improving services for their students. Yearly and periodic program assessment is conducted not only as a gauge for meeting set goals, but more importantly for program improvement.

7. **Follow-up of Program Completers and Non-Completers** — The concern of counseling staff for their students does not end after graduation. Follow-up of graduates as well as early leavers is crucial in assisting students in becoming successful in their careers and life. Counselors of the identified exemplary programs continue to devise a more effective means of doing follow-up.

"Young people need to have a hopeful vision of the future and an idea about how to get from where they are now to where they would like to be" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1994, p. 2). Yes — the nine exemplary career guidance programs have taken up this challenge. They are investing in the future.

References

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1995 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Career and Technology Education
Guidance and Counseling Program
Garland Independent School District
Harris Hill Administration Building
P.O. Box 469026
Garland, TX 75046-9026

Phillip Gilbreath
Director
(214) 494-8540

Strongly supported by parents, community organizations, private industries, and school staff, the program empowers students in grades K-12 to achieve their potential and experience success through a comprehensive, integrated program. Students have access to information and assistance in the development of skills necessary for decision-making, problem-solving, and career and life planning.

Career and Technology Education
Career Guidance and Counseling Program
Katy Independent School District
Miller Career Center
1734 Katyland Drive
Katy, TX 77493

Bonny Green
Director
(713) 396-6300

Katy ISD's Career Guidance and Counseling Program integrates career awareness, technical preparation, and academic excellence in preparing students for the workforce. Middle and junior high school students participate in the ACT's Career Planning program, an assessment designed to provide students with accurate, comprehensive information about their abilities and interests and help them explore and identify career paths.

1995 EXEMPLARY CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS
(Continued)

Career Development Center
San Joaquin Delta College
5151 Pacific Avenue
Stockton, CA 95207

Marcela Rodgers-Vieira
Counselor/Coordinator
(209) 474-5674

The Career Development Center helps students with career life planning by (a) enhancing their self-knowledge and (b) refining their skills needed in seeking and processing information, analyzing career problems, formulating creative solutions, choosing the most promising career opportunities, and implementing plans to accomplish goals that integrate their personal and career aspirations.

Career Guidance and Counseling Program
Caddo-Kiowa Vocational-Technical Center
P.O. Box 190
Ft. Cobb, OK 73038

Glenda Taylor
Prog. Supervisor
(405) 643-5511

A comprehensive career development program, the Career Guidance and Counseling Program of Caddo-Kiowa Vocational-Technical Center (C/K VTC) helps secondary and adult students in developing and implementing an individualized career plan. To facilitate their transition from school to work, all students are required to attend job readiness classes and participate in on-the-job training in the field.

JOBS Program— OWLS
(Older, Wiser, Learning Students)
Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College
P.O. Box 3989
200 I Street Northeast
Miami, OK 74353

Dr. Sue Stidham
JOBS Prog. Director
(918) 542-8441

Designed to assist individuals who have dropped out of schools, those "trapped" in low-paying jobs, AFDC recipients, and displaced homemakers, the JOBS Program – OWLS (Older, Wiser, Learning Students) at the Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College collaborates with various agencies such as the Department of Human Services, Job Training Agency, Native American organizations, area churches, and Community Action groups in helping these adults students realize their dream of obtaining an education, and ultimately, breaking the cycle of poverty.

The Pathway Program
St. Petersburg Junior College
P.O. Box 1348
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

Tonjua Williams
Coordinator
(813) 341-3767

The Pathway Program paves the way for aspiring disadvantaged and other underrepresented students to enter the Nursing and Allied Health programs in St. Petersburg Junior College. The program takes pride in its strong career guidance component and other services that enable students to increase their self-esteem and self-advocacy; improve their socialization, work, and study skills; gain knowledge on conflict resolution and problem solving; and make career decisions that match their interests, abilities, and aptitudes.

Project SOAR
(Success Opportunities through Articulated Resources)
Metro Tech
1900 Springlake Drive
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

Brenda Nixon
Project Coordinator
405) 424-8324

Project SOAR, a project initiated by the Oklahoma City Schools, provides its students access to an extensive career guidance and counseling program that includes (a) career awareness, (b) career exploration, and (c) career planning. Each school in the district has organized and continues to maximize resources, including computer-generated information available through the Career Resource Centers in responding to the counseling needs of their students.

Springdale High School's Career Guidance and Counseling Program
Springdale Public Schools
1103 West Emma Street
Springdale, AR 72764

Linda Auman
Counselor Coordinator/ Vocational Coordinator
(501) 750-8883

A teacher advisory system, based on a "Career Action Plan" (CAP), makes it possible to respond to the career guidance needs of a large number of students. Teacher advisors, trained by counselors, meet monthly with approximately 20 students. The commitment of counselors, teachers, parents, administrators, business and industry, and students to continue improving the guidance program at Springdale High School accounts for the success of the program in (a) exposing students and parents to different educational and occupational opportunities, (b) responding to the counseling needs of a diverse group of students, and (c) assisting students to successfully transition from school to work and/or postsecondary education.

Student Services/Counseling Program
Renton Technical College
3000 NE 4th Street
Renton, WA 98056

Michael Crehan
Counselor
(206) 235-5840

The Student Services/Counseling program, an integral part of the Renton Technical College, assists a diverse student population with an average age of 32-years old in setting educational and life goals and in making appropriate career choices. To enhance students' success, the program provides support services, including counseling, financial aid information, co-op placement, job fairs, career fairs, tutoring, transportation, child care, and mentoring.

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